

### IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:  
a Serial Attached Small Computer Systems Interface (SAS) expander configured to communicate with a plurality of SAS devices using, at least in part a SAS protocol, the expander comprising:  
a plurality of ports capable of being coupled to a plurality of SAS devices via an associated plurality of communication links, the links being compliant with ~~Serial Attached Small Computer Systems Interface (SAS)~~ protocol; and  
communication control circuitry to provide selectable communication control between at least a first device and at least a second device of said plurality of SAS devices, said communication control circuitry configured to designate at least one zone among said plurality of SAS devices, said communication control circuitry further configured to evaluate a communication request from one of said plurality of SAS devices to allow or deny said communication request based upon said at least one zone.
2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said selectable communication control comprises restricting access between at least said first device and at least said second device.
3. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein ~~said circuitry is capable of designating at least one zone,~~ said at least one zone comprises ~~ing~~ a third device and fourth device, and wherein said selectable communication control comprises restricting access of at least said first device to at least said third and fourth device of said zone.
4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein selectable communication control comprises allocating bandwidth of at least one selected path between at least said first device and at least said second device.
5. (Currently Amended) A system comprising:

a plurality of devices capable of communicating in accordance with Serial Attached Small Computer Systems Interface (SAS) protocol;

a SAS expander configured to communicate with a plurality of SAS devices using, at least in part the SAS protocol, the SAS expander including communication control circuitry to provide selectable communication control between at least a first SAS device and at least a second SAS device of said plurality of SAS devices, said communication control circuitry configured to designate at least one zone among said plurality of SAS devices, said communication control circuitry further configured to evaluate a communication request from one of said plurality of SAS devices to allow or deny said communication request based upon said at least one zone; and

said first device comprising a circuit card and a bus, said circuit card being capable of being coupled to said bus and said circuitry.

6. (Original) The system of claim 5, wherein said selectable communication control comprises restricting access between at least said first device and at least said second device.

7. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 5, wherein ~~said circuitry is capable of designating at least one zone~~, said at least one zone comprises a third device and fourth device, and wherein said selectable communication control comprises restricting access of at least said first device to at least said third and fourth device of said zone.

8. (Original) The system of claim 5, wherein said selectable communication control comprises allocating bandwidth of at least one selected path between at least said first device and at least said second device.

9. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

designating at least one zone via communication control circuitry located within a SAS expander, said SAS expander configured to communicate with a plurality of SAS devices using, at least in part a SAS protocol, said at least one zone comprising at least a first device of a plurality of SAS devices; and

controlling communication between at least one other of said plurality of SAS devices and said first device via communication control circuitry, said first device and said other device being capable of communicating in accordance with a Serial Attached Small Computer Systems Interface (SAS) protocol; and

evaluating a communication request from one of said plurality of devices, at said communication control circuitry, to allow or deny said communication request based upon said at least one zone.

10. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein said controlling communication comprises restricting access of said other device to said first device in said zone.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein said restricting access comprises restricting any communication between said first device and said other device.

12. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein said other device is capable of reading data from said first device.

13. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:

a SAS expander configured to communicate with a plurality of SAS devices using, at least in part a SAS protocol, said expander comprising:

a plurality of first ports capable of coupling a plurality of first SAS devices together via an associated plurality of first communication links, said plurality of first SAS devices being capable of communicating via a first communication protocol, said first communication protocol comprising a Serial Attached Small Computer Systems Interface (SAS) communication protocol;

a plurality of second ports capable of coupling a plurality of second SAS devices together via an associated plurality of second communication links, said plurality of second SAS devices being capable of communicating via a second communication protocol, said second communication protocol comprises a Serial Advanced Technology Attachment (S-ATA) communication protocol; and

communication control circuitry to provide selectable communication control between at least a first one of said plurality of first SAS devices and a second one of said plurality of first SAS devices, said communication control circuitry configured to designate at least one zone among said plurality of SAS devices, said communication control circuitry further configured to evaluate a communication request from one of said plurality of devices to allow or deny said communication request based upon said at least one zone.

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Original) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein said selectable communication control comprises restricting access between at least said first one and said second one of said plurality of first devices.

16. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein ~~said circuitry is capable of designating at least one zone,~~ said zone comprising a third device and fourth device, and wherein said selectable communication control comprises restricting access of at least said one of said first plurality of devices to said third and fourth device of said zone.

17. (Original) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein said selectable communication control comprises allocating bandwidth of at least one selected path between at least said first one and said second one of said plurality of first devices.

18. (Currently Amended) An article comprising:

a machine readable medium having stored thereon instructions that when executed by a machine result in the machine performing operations comprising:

designating at least one zone via communication control circuitry located within a SAS expander, said SAS expander configured to communicate with a plurality of SAS devices using, at least in part a SAS protocol, said at least one zone comprising at least a first device of a plurality of SAS devices; and

controlling communication between at least one other of said plurality of devices and said first device via communication control circuitry, said first device and said other device being capable of communicating in accordance with a Serial Attached Small Computer Systems Interface (SAS) protocol; and

evaluating a communication request from one of said plurality of SAS devices, at said communication control circuitry, to allow or deny said communication request based upon said at least one zone.

19. (Original) The article of claim 18, wherein said controlling communication comprises restricting access of said other device to said first device in said zone.

20. (Original) The article of claim 19, wherein said restricting access comprises restricting any communication between said first device and said other device.

21. (Original) The article of claim 19, wherein said other device is capable of reading data from said first device.